

2017/2018 has been an exciting year for the LAC Council and Lil' LAC Club who have been busy successfully achieving fabulous results in making their voices heard locally, regionally and nationally. The aims of the LACC are to help design, develop and shape services for Rotherham Looked After and Leaving Care young people and ensure that Looked After and Leaving Care young people have their Voices heard within Social Care, Early Help and the wider Children's Development Agenda. All of which have been successfully met over the past 12 months. The numerous experiences and opportunities offered to young people at the LAC Council and Lil' LACC are specifically designed to increase social capital, self-awareness and self-esteem, to foster resilience and support better outcomes for our vulnerable young people and of course very importantly to have fun!

LAC Shaping Services

The LAC Council are a committed Voice & Influence group who meet weekly. Ofsted visited our group in November and we are pleased to say this is what was published in their January 2018 Report about us:

'The members of the Looked After Children's Council do a very good job of making sure that staff listen to them, so that they understand how to improve services for Children in Care and Care Leavers. This includes helping to recruit Social Workers and train Foster Carers.' (Ofsted 2018)



The Ofsted Inspector also told senior Management that the LAC Council was a real burgeoning strength and said they were *'vibrant and committed'* and were clearly having an impact on the service provided to Looked After Children.

The Looked After Children's Council has held focus groups, 1;1 discussions, and delivered campaigns that have helped to shape services to improve the lives of Looked After and Leaving Care young people in Rotherham, here are some examples:



- Improving the lives of Looked after Children and young people by planning and delivering a campaign 'Bin Liners are **NOT** Suitcases' to stop the practice of bin liners being given to LAC when they move placements and asking for suitcases to carry their belongings and precious items instead. This 6 month Campaign was raised Locally, Regionally and Nationally and saw Policy and practice change in Rotherham. The group had also creating their own video 'Precious Things' and celebrated their success by holding a sensational Fashion Show and Event with RCAT where they all dressed in Black Bin-Liner outfits to raise awareness of the changes.
- Improving Fostering in Rotherham #1 by creating a set of 8 questions to place the child's voice in the Foster Carer Panel Process
- Improving Fostering in Rotherham #2 by developing a young person friendly confidential form for LAC to feedback their views and perceptions of current Foster Placements – the resulting feedback will be routinely analysed to support service improvement.
- Improving Health Services for LAC, have consulted with Public Health England and Sheffield Hallam University, information to be included in Health Needs Assessment and LAC Emotional Health Advisory Group.
- Improved Virtual Schools Service by holding a LAC specific focus group to discuss themes of friendship, feeling safe and secure and recognising talents and hobbies, to enable them to improve services for LAC within School setting.
- Reviewed and re-launched the LAC and Leaving Care Corporate Promises where the Mayor, Council Leaders and Senior Managers have renewed their support by signing up to them.
- Supported the development of and engaged in the 'Different but Equal' event where LAC Council expressed their opinions on a number of topics alongside other peer groups
- Engaged in the Children in Care Regional Conference in Leeds University. The LAC COUNCIL delivered their presentation around Destination Poland and 'Bin Liners are **NOT** Suitcases' Campaign. The Children's Commissioner for England Anne Longfield was so taken by the

Rotherham presentation she photographed the group and their images of 'bin liners' and Tweeted our Campaign nationally.

LAC Community Engagement

The LAC Council are also committed to engaging with their community and have helped plan and deliver the following;

- Armed Forces Day in Rotherham Town Centre
- Rotherham Show
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Remembrance Sunday Parade and Church Service, where members placed a poppy wreath on Clifton Park Cenotaph on behalf of all Looked After Children in Rotherham.

International Residential Destination Poland April 2017

The LAC COUNCIL also underwent a 9 month fundraising campaign to raise funds to take 14 LAC on an educational visit to Poland for 5 days. To prepare for the journey the group researched the Holocaust, engaged in Holocaust Memorial Day event and visited the Holocaust Museum to learn about hate crimes and the importance of love, peace and community cohesion. The young people had a very emotional and moving experience visiting Auschwitz and Auschwitz Birkenau memorial and museums. The stark reality of torture, brutality and starvation experienced in the former concentration camps were communicated in photographic evidence, displays and mountains of personal items taken from Jewish people who were later murdered proved to be distressing and overwhelming for some of our group.

'I will never forget this as long as I live' 15 year old LACC member

Award Winners

Each of the LAC Council members were nominated for the Pride of Rotherham Awards (PORA) in recognition for their commitment and dedication to volunteering and the Voice & Influence work to bring about positive changes for Looked After and Leaving Care Young people in Rotherham through the LAC Council. All LAC Council members received individual PORA's a certificate and trophy presented to them at New York Stadium September 2017.

Corporate Parenting Panel

The LAC COUNCIL also sit on the Corporate Parenting Panel and present written reports and verbal updates and presentations every two months at the Town Hall of what the group have been doing, their consultations and their current campaigns. The group highlight issues that are important to LAC to the CPP and gain support to campaign for changes for Looked After and Leaving Care young people.

Looked After Children's Club – (AKA 'LIL' LACC) –

In October 2017, the LAC Participation Team opened our Lil LAC CLUB for looked after children at primary school aged 6 to 11 years. Our Looked After Children have had many opportunities to participate in lively and fun group activities and games so children can meet and make friends in a safe welcoming environment. The LAC CLUB membership continues to grow and we have 18 children who regularly engage. The children love to run around, play games, engage in arts and craft activities, and fill the room with laughter and loud enthusiastic chatter. Verbal feedback from children and foster carers alike is extremely positive a Foster Carer recently emailed about the LAC CLUB:

'The children absolutely love it and meeting other LAC. I personally think it is more than beneficial to them' Foster Carer

For full details of the LAC COUNCIL and Lil LAC Club please see the Update Reports submitted to LSCB quarterly between April 2017 and March 2018.

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